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Contact: Erin Rath/Jeff Turcotte

## **SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES GREGG MEASURE TO HELP FIREFIGHTERS**

### ***Bill Extends to Firefighters and Police Officers the Right to Discuss Workplace Issues with their employers***

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, recently praised the HELP Committee passage of bipartisan legislation, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, that will guarantee public safety officers employed by States or local governments the right to discuss workplace issues with their employers.

Senator Gregg, the author of the legislation, stated, "Currently, state and local government employees remain the only sizable group of workers left in America who do not have the basic right to enter into collective bargaining agreements with their employers. While most States do provide some collective bargaining rights for their public employees, others do not. This bill aims to correct this disparity."

Gregg stressed that communities which promote such cooperation enjoy much more effective and efficient delivery of emergency services. Such cooperation, however, is not possible in States that do not provide public safety employees with the fundamental right to bargain with their employers.

"The nation's first responders deserve the right to negotiate with their employers like most any other workers. They work too hard and risk their lives too often to deserve anything less," said Gregg.

David Lang, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire, applauded the leadership and support of Senator Gregg, "This is the first step in ensuring that our nation's first responders have the ability to meet with their employer and discuss their conditions of employment. Senator Gregg, by sponsoring this legislation, is ensuring the playing field is level for all full time police officers and fire fighters and sets the stage for better labor management relations which will ultimately see to cost effective and high quality public safety services."

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## **S. 606, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2003 Bill Summary**

- . Requires States, within 2 years, to guarantee the right of public safety officers to form and voluntarily join a union to bargain collectively over hours, wages and conditions of employment;
- . Protects the right of public safety officers to form, join, or assist any labor organization or to refrain from any such activity, freely and without fear of penalty or reprisal;
- . Prohibits the use of strikes, lockouts, sickouts, work slowdowns or any other action that is designed to compel an employer, officer or labor organization to agree to the terms of a proposed contract and that will measurably disrupt the delivery of services;
- . Continues to allow States to enforce right-to-work laws which prohibit employers and labor organizations from negotiating labor agreements that require union membership or payment of union fees as a condition of employment;
- . Preserves the right of management to not bargain over issues traditionally reserved for management level decisions;
- . Exempts all states with a State bargaining law for public safety officers that are equal to or greater than the rights granted under Federal law;
- . Gives States the option to exempt from coverage subdivisions with populations of less than 5,000 or fewer than 25 full time employees.

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